

In the course of the following year Disraeli wrote in the diary from which we have already quoted: —

Beckford was so enraptured when he read *Tjie Psychological* that he sent Clarke, his confidential agent and publisher, with whom alone he corresponds, to call upon me on some pretence or other, and give Mm a description of the person, converse, &c., of the aiithor of what he was pleased to style 'that transcendent work.' Clarke called accordingly and wrote back to Beckford that Disraeli was the most conceited person he had ever met in the whole course of his life. B. answered and rated C. roundly for his opinion, telling him that what 'appeared conceit in *D.* was only the irrepressible consciousness of superior power.' Some time after this, when Clarke knew me better, he very candidly told me the whole story and gave me a copy of B.'s letter.

I shall always consider *The Psychological* as the perfection of English prose and a chef d'œuvre. It has not paid its expenses. *Vivian Grey*, with faults which even youth can scarcely excuse, in short, the most unequal; imperfect, irregular thing that indiscretion ever published, has sold thousands, and eight years after its publication a new edition is announced to-day — so much for public taste.

In fact, in spite of the comparative unfriendliness of the critics and the praise it received from some of those whose praise was best worth having, *Qontarini* was a failure.

I published *Contarini Fleming* anonymously and in the midst of a revolution. It was almost still-born, and having written it with deep thought and feeling, I was naturally discouraged from further effort. Yet the youthful writer who may, like me, be inclined to despair, may learn also from my example not to be precipitate in his resolves. Gradually *Contarini Fleming* found sympathising readers; Goethe¹ and Beckford were impelled to communicate their unsolicited opinions of this work to its anonymous author, and I have seen a criticism on it by Heine, of which any writer might be justly proud.²

The criticism by Heine is worthy of citation, as the judgment of the only Hebrew contemporary with

¹ Disraeli must have been thinking of the incident already related (p. 176) in connexion with *Vivian Grey*; Goethe died in March, 1832, a month or more before *Contarini* was published.

² General Preface to the Novels, 1870.